



**State of Connecticut**  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
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**DEPUTY MAJORITY WHIP**

**MEMBER**  
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**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE**

March 7, 2016

**IN SUPPORT OF: H.B. No. 5534 AN ACT CONCERNING THE PRACTICE OF NATUROPATHY**

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, and members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Ezequiel Santiago, State Representative from the 130<sup>th</sup> District in Bridgeport.

I am pleased to offer this testimony in support of H.B. No. 5534, An Act Concerning the Practice of Naturopathy.

This bill defines the practice of "Advanced naturopathic care" and permits a person licensed to engage in the practice of naturopathy to engage in the practice of advanced naturopathic care.

There are many reasons to support this bill, you will hear from students, faculty and staff of the University of Bridgeport and others on why this is such an important bill, I would like to focus on my home town of Bridgeport.

The University of Bridgeport which resides in my District, has a nationally-recognized 4-year doctoral program in naturopathy and graduates some of the finest students in the country. My community is the host for the only College of Naturopathic Medicine on the east coast, our competitors are on the west coast, mid-west and in Canada. However a university in Maryland has begun work to open a competing college, that facility will be a direct competitor to our University and our state.

Residents of Connecticut are very sensitive to the competition we have from other states and as elected representatives we must make sure we are providing employers in our communities and our state the tools to be competitive in today's economy. The University of Bridgeport is asking for those tools. Allowing Connecticut Naturopathic Physicians to practice their profession in the same way they do in many other states around the county just makes sense.

This is important for the students that want to come to Connecticut, and if we do not offer those options once they graduate, they are faced with the prospect of having to move out of state in order to practice in a jurisdiction that allows them to work within the full scope of their professional training. If Connecticut moves forward to modernize these laws, the College of Naturopathic Medicine in Bridgeport will not only compete with any new school in Maryland, they believe they can double their student body. This will have a significant positive impact on my community and our state.

Another important reason to modernize the practice is current law limits the health care services the College can provide to our community members who visit the free and low-cost clinics offered at UB, where over 20,000 patients are seen per year, mainly people from Greater Bridgeport area who may not have insurance coverage or any other avenue to access such care.

This situation also contributes to difficulty in the recruitment of the best students from around the country, as well as premier faculty and researchers, to our College of Naturopathic Medicine and reduces the opportunities for our graduates within the State, forcing them to relocate to other states that offer them the ability to practice to the full extent of their training and competencies.

We frequently talk about the need to retain our young people in Connecticut. Adopting the provisions of HB 5534 is a step in the right direction as it will recognize the skills and training of the graduates of the University of Bridgeport's program and allow them to put down roots in our communities, contributing the economic and professional vitality of the state.

I urge the Committee to approve this legislation.